

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5263

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2677

DEPARTMENT FOR HA

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS SHUM, ELAB, AR
SUBJECT LABOR DISAPPEARANCES

1. SUMMARY. DEPASST SECRETARY SCHNIEDER (HA/HR)
HAS ASKED FOR EMBASSY LATEST INFORMATION
REGARDING WORKER OR TRADE UNION KIDNAPPINGS.
THIS REPORT SUMMARIZES THE INFORMATION WE
HAVE ON SUCH DISAPPEARANCES, THE NUMBERS
INVOLVED, THE INGERENT PROBLEMS WE HAVE
IN ASSESSING OUR SOURCES RELIABILITY, THE
PATTERNS WE SEE IN SUCH INCIDENTS AND THE
PROBABLE CAUSES AND SIGNIFICANCE. KEEPING
THE LID ON LABOR HAS BEEN A HIGH GOVERNMENT
PRIORITY SINCE THE MILITARY TOOK OVER IN
1976 AND STRIKES ARE CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE.
MOST LABOR ARRESTS TOOK PLACE
SHORTLY FOLLOWING THE COUP, BUT SURVEILLANCE AND
REPRESSION CONTINUE, WITH HEIGHTENED SECURITY MEASURES
TAKING PLACE DURING MOMENTS OF ILLEGAL STRIKE ACTIVITY
AS OCCURERED LAST NOVEMBER AND AGAIN LAST MONTH. IF
DEPARTMENT HAS ANY INFORMATION WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THE
PATTERN OF WORKER DISAPPEARANCES HAS CHANGED OR THAT
THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT UPSURGE IN REPRESSION AGAINST
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THE WORKER SECTOR IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF 1978,
EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING DETAILS IN ORDER
TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER. END SUMMARY.

2. IN REVEIWEING OUR RECORDS CONCERNING DISAPPEARANCES
OR DENTENTIONS OF UNION LEADERS AND WORKERS, WE FIND
THAT MOST OF THE NAMES WE HAVE WERE EXTRACTED FROM

DOCUMENTS RECEIVED BY THE EMBASSY OR OTHERWISE OBTAINED
AS FOLLOWS:

-- A STATEMENT DATED JANUARY 14, 1977, PREPARED BY
THE SELF STYLED "FIRST OF MAY CLASSIST UNION GROUP"--
AN ORGANIZATION ABOUT WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION,
BUT WHOSE RHETORIC APPEARS TO HAVE A MILDLY TROTSKYITE
RING. IT MAY BE AN OFF SHOOT OF THE SMALL REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST PARTY (PCR).

-- A COMPOSITE LIST OF 230 "KNOWN TRADE UNION LEADERS
(WHO HAVE BEEN) PERSECUTED, FIRED OR EXILED SINCE
MARCH 24, 1976" PREPARED BY ARGENTINE LABOR LEADERS
FOR THE ICFTU-ORIT (OTTO KERSTEN) DELEGATION IN
FEBRUARY 1977.

-- AN UNDATED DRAFT COPY OF A LETTER PREPARED BY THE
LABOR MINISTRY FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO TRANSMIT TO
THE ICFTU CONTAINING 235 NAMES AND THE DISPOSITION OR
STATUS OF EACH CASE.

-- AN UNDATED MEMO (CIRCA MID 1977) PREPARED FOR
LABATT BY ORECSUR/CLAT.

-- A LETTER AND ENCLOSURES DATED APRIL 30, 1977 FROM
THE "FIRST OF MAY UNION GROUP" ADDRESSED TO "AFL-CIO/ORIT/
ICFTU/IMF" (WE BELIEVE THIS WAS PREPARED IN CONNECTION
WITH A VISIT BY UAWS ESTEBAN TORRES).

-- AN UNDATED AND UNSIGNED MEMO PREPARED ESPECIALLY
FOR CODEL YATRON BY LIGHT AND POWER UNION LEADER JUAN JOSE
TACCONC.

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-- SEVERAL LISTS PREPARED BY THE SOCIALIST WORKERS
PARTY (PST) IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1977 OF ARRESTED
PARTY MEMBERS (NOT ALL WORKERS) FOR DELIVERY TO CODEL
YATRON, MS DERIAN OR THE SOL CHAIKIN SOLIDARITY TEAM
(AFL-CIO).

-- A LIST PRESENTED TO US BY THE BELGIAN EMBASSY OF
ARGENTINES WHOM THE BELGIAN UNIONS WISH TO LOCATE AND
ASSIST.

-- WALK INS OR OTHER INDIVIDUAL DENUNCIATIONS REGISTERED
WITH THE EMBASSY BY NEXT OF KIN OR THE FRIENDS OF VICTIMS.

3. IN ALL, WE HAVE SLIGHTLY OVER 300 NAMES THUS DERIVED
(AFTER CORRECTING FOR DUPLICATION) OF DISAPPEARED,
DEAD, OR DETAINED "WORKERS" UNDER PEN, THE ACT OF
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OR CIVIL OR MILITARY JUDICIAL
AUTHORITIES ON ACCOUNT OF SUSPECTED INVOLVEMENT IN
EITHER CORRUPTION OR SUBVERSIVE/TERRORIST ACTIVITIES,
SOME OF WHICH RELATE TO INCIDENTS ORIGINATING BEFORE
THE MARCH 1976 COUP. (WE PUT "WORKERS" IN QUOTES,
BECAUSE INADVERTENTLY THERE MAY BE A FEW NAMES INCLUDED
WHICH PROBABLY WOULD FIT BETTER IN THE PROFESSIONAL OR
SOME OTHER CATEGORY). SOME OF THOSE APPEARING AS

DETAINED IN OUR LISTS HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED, INCLUDING TWO OR THREE WHO AGAIN ARE ACTIVE IN TRADE UNION AFFAIRS.

4. THE DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN PARA 2 ALLEGED MANY OTHER INSTANCES OF REPRESSION BY THE SECURITY FORCES AGAINST WORKERS AND LEADERS, BUT WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE NAMES OF THE VICTIMS INVOLVED IN THOSE CASES. FROM TIME TO TIME, WE ALSO GET REPORTS OF MILITARY/POLICE OPERATIONS, STAKEOUTS, SEARCHES AND SEIZURES, GUN BATTLES AND ARRESTS IN THE FACTORY DISTRICTS, USUALLY WITHOUT ANY CASUALTY LISTS OR MUCH DETAIL BEING SUPPLIED. SOMETIMES SUCH INCIDENTS ARE REPORTED IN THE PRESS, BUT MORE OFTEN THEY ARE NOT. SOMETIMES WE BELIEVE OUR SOURCES ARE REPORTING ACCURATELY; MANY
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TIMES WE ARE IN DOUBT BECAUSE OF THE AMBIGUITY OF THE INFORMATION, IN WHICH CASE WE RECORD IT AS RAW AND

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UNEVALUATED.

5. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS THAT IMMEDIATELY COME TO MIND:
-- THERE WAS AN INCIDENT LAST OCTOBER IN WHICH MONTONEROS SUSPECTS WERE KILLED JUST OUTSIDE THE FENCE

OF CHRYSLERS MAIN PLANT BY SECURITY FORCES. THE MANAGEMENT CONFIRMED THE INCIDENT TO US. THE INDIVIDUALS WERE NOT CHRYSLER EMPLOYEES, BUT PLANT PERSONNEL INTERPRETED THE ACTION AS A WARNING AGAINST STIRRING UP LABOR TROUBLE.

-- WE HAVE RECENTLY HEARD ALLEGATIONS FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT 19 UNNAMED MEMBERS OF THE CERAMICS WORKERS UNION WERE KIDNAPPED LAST NOVEMBER AND KILLED IN CAMPO DE MAYO. THE CERAMICS UNION REPORTEDLY WAS HEAVILY INFILTRATED BY MONTONEROS AT ONE TIME. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, THIS INCIDENT MAY HAVE BEEN RELATED TO A LONGSTANDING LABOR CONFLICT IN A CERAMICS PLANT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BUENOS AIRES (IN VILLA ADELINA).

-- THERE WAS ALSO A FLURRY OF REPORTED ARRESTS, DISAPPEARANCES AND EVEN ONE OR TWO ALLEGED SHOTINGS OF STRIKE PROVOCATEURS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE RAILROAD AND TRANSPORTATION STRIKES LAST NOVEMBER (SE 77 BUENOS CONFIDENTIAL

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AIRES 8309 AND EARLIER).

-- JUAN TACCONI AND OTHER LIGHT AND POWER SOURCES HAVE MENTIONED SEVERAL ABDUCTIONS OF SEGBA POWER UTILITY SHOP STEWARD AND OTHER WORKER ACTIVISTS OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS. (TACCONI HAS BEEN UNHELPFUL IN ASSISTING US TO ANSWER 77 STATE 288837 HOWEVER, WE SUSPECT BECAUSE OF THE CHASM IN THIS UNION BETWEEN THE PERONIST LEADERSHIP AND THE REMNANTS OF THE TROTSKYITE ELEMENTS AT THE RANK AND FILE LEVEL IN THE CORDOBA LOCAL).

-- DURING THE RECENT ABORTED STRIKE OF THE LOCOMOTIVE TRAIN ENGINEERS IN MARCH, THREE UNION LOCAL LEADERS WERE ARRESTED AND ARE NOW BEING HELD PENDING CRIMINAL CHARGES (BUENOS AIRES 1798 AND 1752), WHILE FIVE OTHERS REPORTEDLY ESCAPED THE DRAGNET.

-- ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO AT LEAST FIVE UNION ACTIVISTS FROM DIFFERENT UNIONS (CIVIL SERVICE, HEALTH AND TEXTILES) DISAPPEARED IN SEPARATE AND PROBABLY UNRELATED INCIDENTS.

-- A MEMBER OF THE "COMMITTEE OF 5," POSTAL LEADER BALDASSINI, INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR AT LUNCH ON MARCH 28 THAT HIS SECRETARY PLUS SEVEN OTHERS WERE TAKEN FROM A HOUSE THE EVENING BEFORE.

6. THE LABOR SECTOR NATURALLY HAS BEEN AN AREA OF HIGH PRIORITY CONCERN TO THE SECURITY FORCES SINCE THE MILITARY TOOK OVER IN 1976-- ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF WORKER DISCONTENT OVER THE GOVERNMENT WAGE AND ECONOMIC POLICIES. UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT'S EMERGENCY SECURITY LAWS, STRIKES ARE TANTAMOUNT TO SUBVERSION AND ARE SUBJECT TO HEAVY PENALTIES. MOST OF THE UNION LEADERS AND MEMBERS CURRENTLY UNDER OFFICIAL DETENTION WERE PICKED UP IN THE MONTHS

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COUP IN AN EFFORT TO CLEAN OUT
THE FACTORIES OF SUSPECTED SUBVERSIVES AS WELL AS TO
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LOCK UP THE TOP PERONIST LEADERS CONNECTED WITH
THE DEPOSED REGIME OF MRS PERON. ABOUT A YEAR AGO,
HOWEVER, CAPTURED MONTONERO DOCUMENTS BEGAN REVEALING A
SHIFT TACTICS AWAY FROM DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH
SECURITY FORCES IN ARMED CLASHES TOWARDS A HEIGHTENED
EMPHASIS ON INFILTRATING THE LABOR SECTOR IN AN EFFORT
TO GAIN WORKER SYMPATHY BY PROVOKING AND SUPPORTING
STRIKE ACTIVITY AND BY ASSASSINATING INDUSTRY FIGURES
KNOWN FOR THEIR ANTI LABOR ATTITUDES. (CF. BUENOS AIRES
A-151 OF 12/6/77 FOR A REPORT ON THE MONTONEROS
ZONAL BULLETIN OF MID 1977). WHILE THE MONTONEROS HAVE
BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY UNSUCCESSFUL IN CONVERTING LABOR RANKS
TO THEIR CAUSE, IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE
SECURITY FORCES REDOUBLED OR AT LEAST REVIEWED THEIR
COUNTERMEASURES IN THE LABOR SECTOR IN RESPONE TO THE
NEW MONTONERO THREAT. INDEED, REPORTS OF GOVERNMENT
REPRESSEION OF WORKERS HEIGHTENED DURING THE NOVEMBER
STRIKE PERIOD LAST YEAR AND AGAIN DURING THE ABORTED
STRIKE OF THE LOCOMOTIVE TRAIN ENGINEERS LAST MONTH.
SECURITY FORCES PARTICULARLY ANTICIPATED POSSIBLE LABOR
TROUBLE BETWEEN JANUARY AND MARCH OF THIS YEAR. A
HIGH RANKING SECURITY SOURCE RECENTLY TOLD THE EMBASSY
THAT THE REASON THE NOVEMBER STRIKE GOT OUT OF HAND WAS THAT
THE GOVERNMENT PROCRATINATED TOO LONT BEFORE TAKING
ADEQUATE MEASURES, WHILE THE REASON THAT THE TRAIN
ENGINEERS STIKE CALL FAILED LAST MONTH WAS BECAUSE
THE SECURITY FORCES MOVED IN QUICKLY TO HEAD IT OFF.
SECURITY OFFICERS ALSO CONFIRM THAT THE JAILING OF THE
TOP PERONIST LABOR LEADERS OF THE CGT AND THE NEUTRALIZATION
OF OTHER TOP NATIONAL LEADERS UNDER THE CURRENT SUSPENSION
OF UNION ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS HAVE LEFT THE FIELD
OPEN FOR WOULD BE AGITATORS AT THE PLANT LEVEL, THUS
REQUIRING A HEAVIER ASSIGNMENT OF SECURITY FORCES TO THE
LABOR BEAT THAN MIGHT ORDINARILY BE THE CASE.

7. NEVERTHELESS, THE EMBASSY IS UNAWARE OF ANY EXTRA
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ORDINARY INCREASE IN WORKER KIDNAPPINGS IN RECENT MONTHS
WHICH MIGHT SUGGEST A NEW PATTERN OF GOVERNMENT REPRESSEION
IN THE LABOR SECTOR. ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THEY
PERCEIVED A NEW MOVE OF REPRESSEION AGAINST WORKER

LEADERS, TWO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF 5, THE ARGENTINE
LABOR MOVEMENTS TOP AD HOC SECRETARIAT AT THE MOMENT,
DENIED THAT THIS PAST WEEKEND.

8. HA/HR EVIDENTLY HAS SOME INFORMATION SUGGESTING
A SIGNIFICANT UPSURGE OF LABOR KIDNAPPINGS THIS PAST
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, WHICH DOES NOT COINCIDE WITH OUR
INFORMATION. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE
DETAILS SO THAT WE CAN LOOK INTO THIS ASPECT OF THE
PROBLEM FURTHER.
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LABOR DISAPPEARANCES
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, AR
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